



OFFICE OF URBAN AFFAIRS
OF THE ARCHDIOCESE OF HARTFORD

Testimony Submitted to the Energy and Technology Committee of the CT General Assembly, February 26, 2008

Raised Senate Bill No.118, An Act Concerning Environmental Justice.

My name is Jeanie Graustein. I am testifying on behalf of the Office of Urban Affairs of the Archdiocese of Hartford, in favor of Raised Senate Bill 118, An Act Concerning Environmental Justice.

Pollution emitting facilities such as power plants and waste processing facilities, which provide services and benefits to citizens of many towns, are too often concentrated in particular communities and neighborhoods, which bear the burdens of diminished health and quality of life. Continuing to increase the concentration of such facilities in overburdened towns and failing to give affected communities more effective notification and means to participate in such decisions is unjust. Giving towns and selected state regulatory agencies new tools to ensure greater environmental equity and justice would better protect many of Connecticut's most vulnerable citizens.

The U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops defines Environmental Justice as "the strong link between social justice and environmental protection emphasizing the needs of the poor" and advocates for "solutions to the disproportionate burdens of environmental degradation borne by the poor and people of color. This includes ... the protection of low-income neighborhoods from toxic hazards." [*Renewing the Earth*, 1991] Respect for human life and dignity must include protecting the vulnerable, particularly children born and unborn, the elderly, the ill, and low-income communities from air pollution and exposures to toxic hazards.

Each year we learn more about the effects and unintended consequences of pollutants on human health. It is time to do all we can to reduce exposures of those most affected by pollution emitting facilities. We urge you to support this bill to ensure environmental justice and a healthier future for all Connecticut's citizens. Thank you.